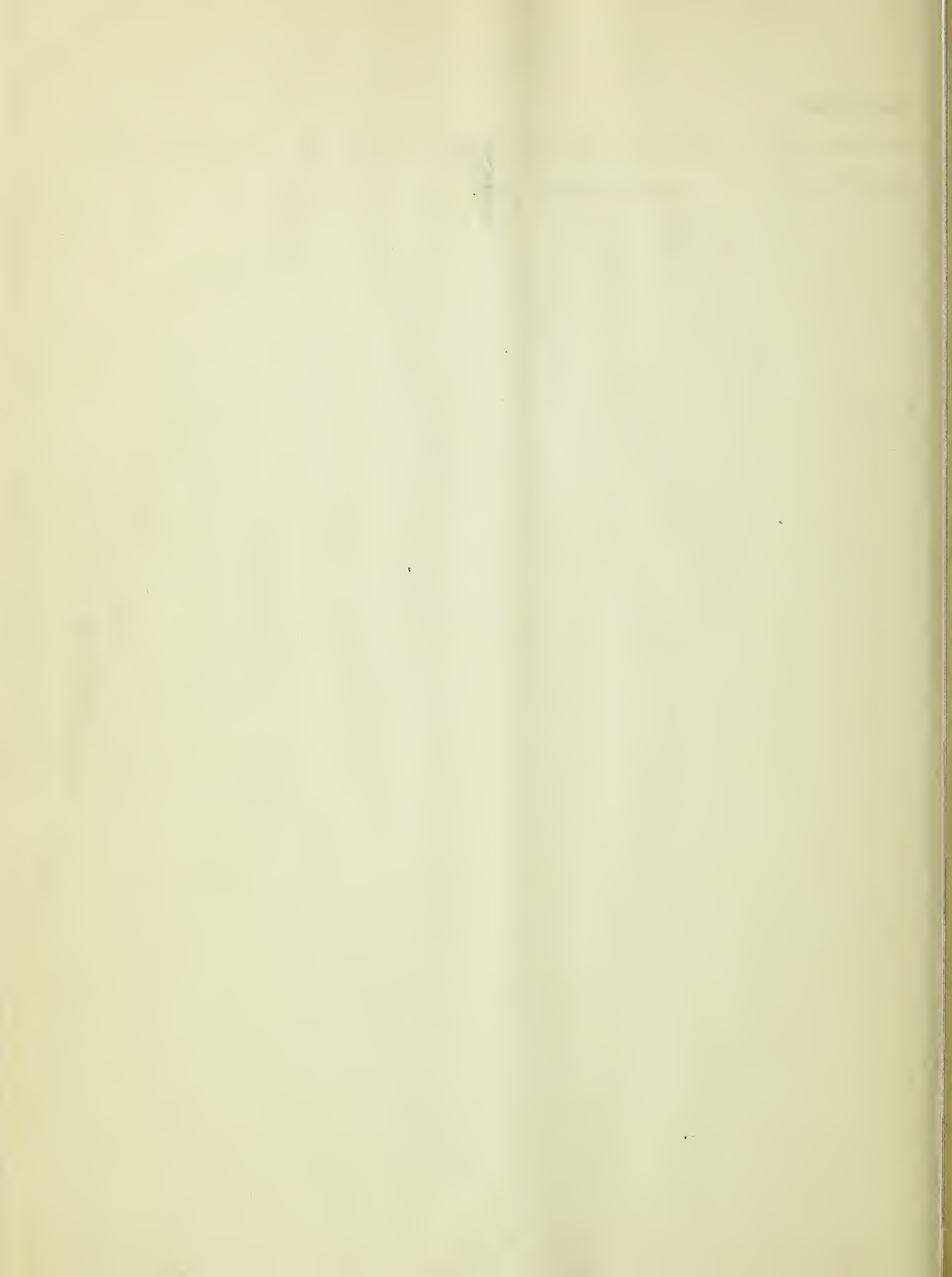


## **Historic, Archive Document**

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



F O R T U N E S   W A S H E D   A W A Y

"THE LAKE THAT GROWS CORN"

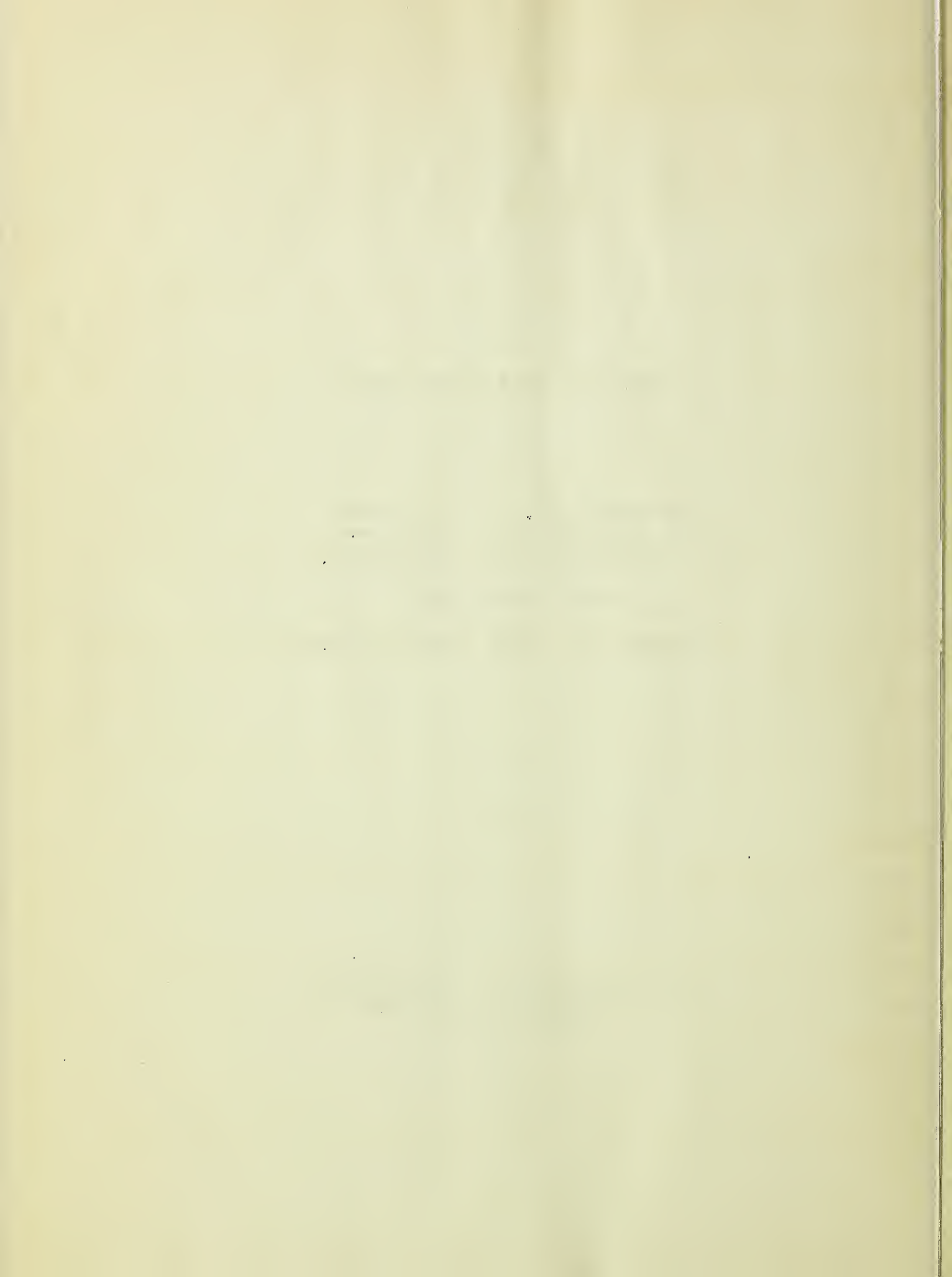
Broadcast No. 36 in a series  
of discussions of soil con-  
servation in the Ohio Valley.

WLW, Cincinnati

December 31, 1938 6:00-6:15 p.m.

---

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE  
Dayton, Ohio



SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain...

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away!

ORGAN: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

ANNOUNCER

Minnesota...land of ten thousand lakes. The name, Minnesota, is of Sioux Indian origin, and means "invisible water." But far from invisible are famed Minnesota lakes--except one in the south branch of Root River valley. The Root River flows through beautiful, narrow valleys crowned here and there by picturesque limestone cliffs. Minnesota lakes are broad and beautiful--all except one. This is the story of that one--the lake that grows corn. In 1868, Fillmore County, Minnesota, was a wilderness...

SOUND: Water in small river, tumbling over rocks, continuing through sequence.

LANE (fading in)

...and look at that water. Clear as crystal, and an endless supply.

KINGSLEY

You're not overlooking the timber, my good friend Lane?

LANE

Indeed not, Kingsley, but it will be a hindrance. It must be burned off, to make way for the city we will build here.

KINGSLEY

Haven't you thought of lumbering, as an industry? After all, we have come all the way from New York to launch this venture of...





LANE

I know, I know, but we can't wait for sawmills and all that. Lumber will be useless because we can't ship it out to the cities. We will have farmers, of course, but I visualize a town precisely upon this spot. I see settlers moving into the valley. I see mills and factories. I see the railroad extended from LaCrosse...

KINGSLEY

...but this particular spot...

LANE

This is an excellent situation. We must have this exact location because...Kingsley, you see that narrow gorge where the water falls over the rocks? There we will construct a great dam because we must have water and...power for our factories.

ORGAN: JUST A MEMORY.

ANNOUNCER

Thus was the townsite of Lanesboro, Minnesota, selected. To it came Dennis Galligan, a native son of old Ireland, and a crew of barrel-chested Norwegians who toiled over the Lanesboro dam in the icy winter of 1869...

SOUND: Distant explosion of powder in rock quarry, then creaking of wheels and pulleys on derrick and windlass; hammers and chisels cutting rock.

DENNIS

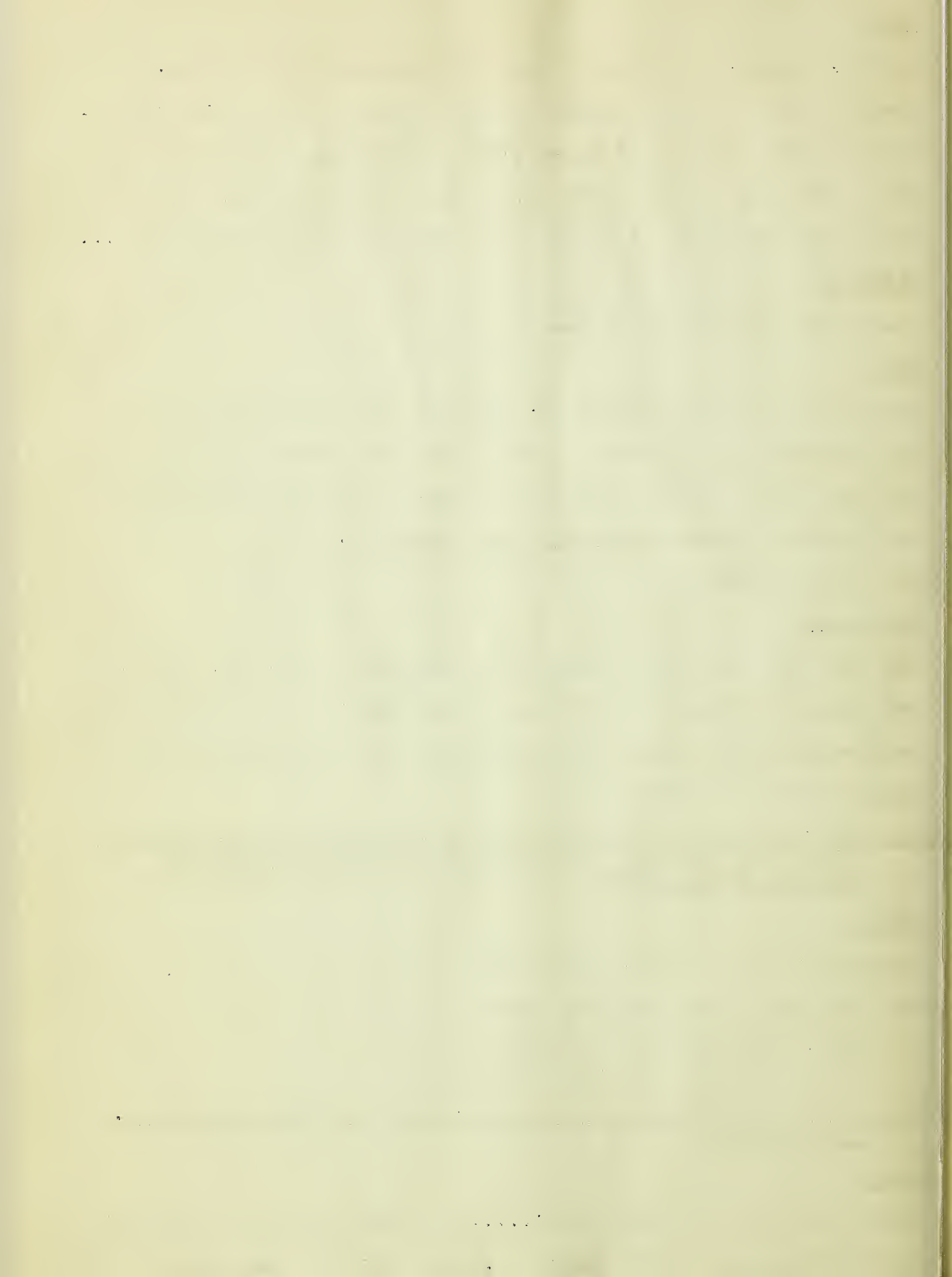
Altogether now, me b'ys. Heave ho!

SOUND: Alla man o hoba (all together)  
Alle tag o (all take a hold)  
Tag o alle (all take a hold)  
Alle sommen nu (all together now)

SOUND: Squoak of windlass and thud of rock as it bumps into place.  
Repeat same.

DENNIS

Hold! Hold it! You blitherin'.....you dumb huskies, notting but muscle where your brains should be. Mind you the pulleys!





SOUND: (Norwegians cackle and chatter unintelligibly.)

DENNIS

Wait, Eric! Ole, let it be...Here comes Jimmy. Hurry, Jimmy, me b'y. Run up the derrick and fix me pulleys. That Olaus Olson, he tangled it.

JIMMY

It's cold, father.

DENNIS (laughing)

Bejabbers, and I know it's cold, son. Hurry, now!

SOUND: Squeaks and rattles of windlass and pulleys.

DENNIS

What a b'y. Little squirrel, he is, Olaus.

OLAUS

Goot poy, Yimmy. Vatch now, you don't fall.

DENNIS

Good worruk, Jimmy, son. Git along now wid th' tools over to th' quarry by th' railroad.

CLAUS

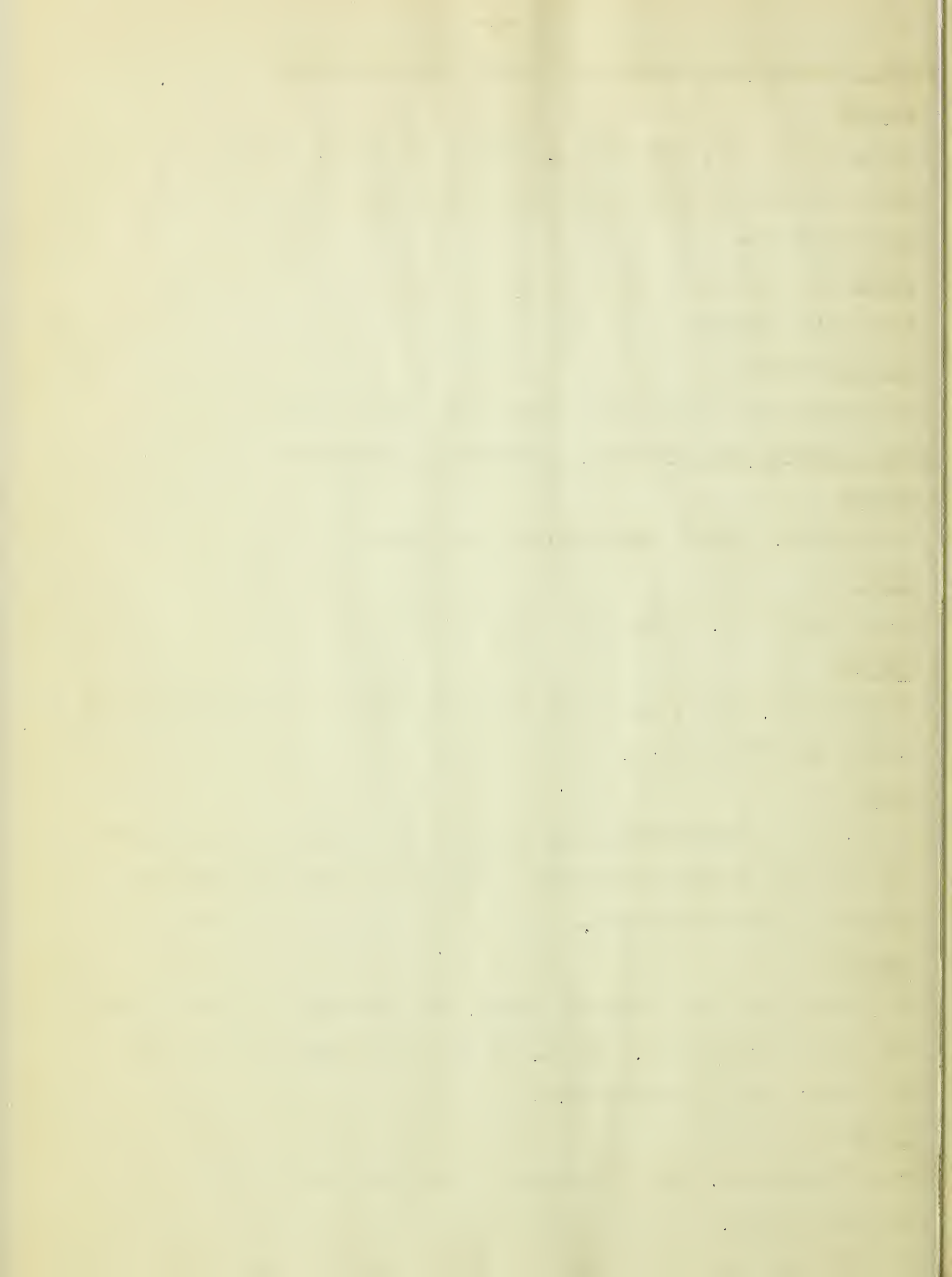
I bet you Missus Galligan she call you one fool for to make your little Yimmy climb dat derrick. Him only eleven year old and you try to break his neck.

DENNIS

Ah! Don't ye worra about me Jimmy. No schoolin' he gets, maybe, but he's a lively one. Faith, and do ye remember when we were building' the dam last year...

OLAUS

Yah, I remember. And I remember how de dam vashed out in dat spring freshet.



DENNIS

Never ye worra about this one going out. The trouble, me lad, was that we built it straight across the gorge. But this one, we curve upstream like a half moon to make it stronger.

OLAUS

You are a goot stone mason, Mister Galligan.

DENNIS

Ah! G'wan with ye. And g'wan get to worruk! Only a few more stones we must lay and the dam will be finished. Heave ho, you huskies, heave!!!

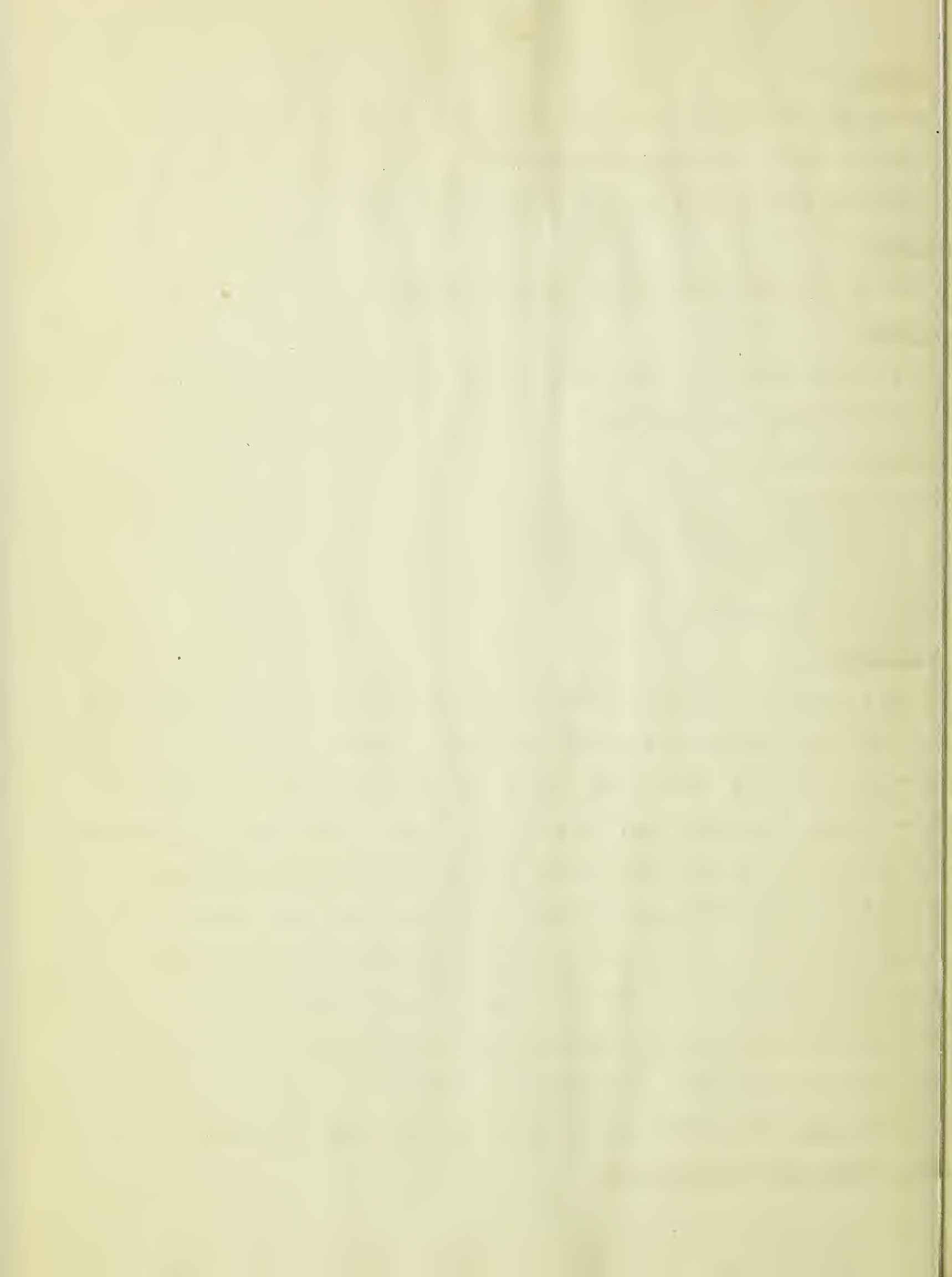
SOUND: Alla man o hoba (all together)  
Alle tag e (all take a hold)  
Tag o alle (all take a hold)  
Alle sommen nu (all together now)

ORGAN: JUST A MEMORY.

ANNOUNCER

Cold it was that winter of '69 in the bustling village of Lanesboro, Minnesota. And the Irish and the Norwegians--how they worked, and how they fought! Drank and fought and worked together. Built the now famous Lanesboro dam, built the railroad over which the products of Root River valley found their way to market, built Lanesboro with its flour mills and factories, thriving upon the trade of early settlers. And it was the waters of Lanesboro reservoir, piled deep and wide and distant behind Dennis Galligan's dam, that brought men, lumber, wheat, and money to Lanesboro. But today, men like Jim Galligan, John Solberg, John Kelly, Ole Habberstad, men who made Lanesboro, recall when the lake was a lake...

SOUND: Door opens and closes.





HABBERSTAD

Ah, Yim Galligan. Coom in, Yim. Ve vas talking how big vas the lake. I remember when it vas about 40 rods wide from Crowley Point to the bluffs.

GALLIGAN

Oh, it was big, Ole. Probably 160 acres--and deep.

SOLBERG

It must of been half a mile wide, Ole, and two mile, or two and a half, long.

KELLY

I remember what a fine body of water it was. The young folks used to go boating on moonlight nights, and you know, Ole, where Duschee Creek comes in...

HABBERSTAD

Yoss, we could go up in dare by boat on picnics.

GALLIGAN

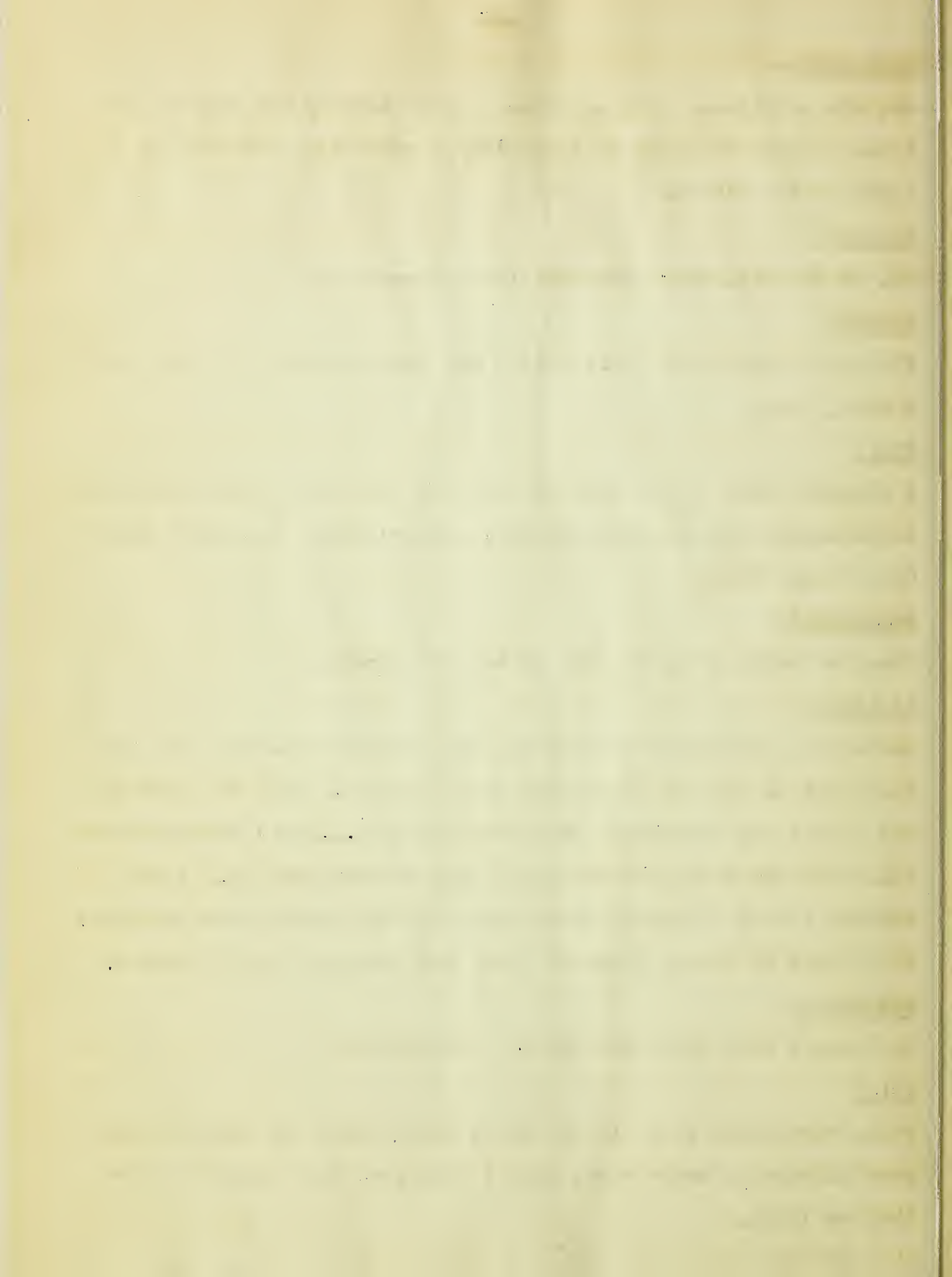
But that's all filled in with mud and willows now--where the boat dock used to be, and even right up to the dam. When we built the dam we had our troubles. The water was deep...and I remember one time when Jim Crowley's mules got away and ran into me. I was driving a team of horses by the dam. We all rolled into the lake. They saved me and my father's team, but Crowley's mules drowned.

HABBERSTAD

Dey should haff saved the mules. (Laughter.)

KELLY

Those Norwegians they all had boats, too, Jim. And they was some good skaters in those days, but, I tell you, they was no better than us Irish.





SOUND: (All laugh and josh each other.)

KELLY

The Irish all lived up on Irish ridge. We always fought with them "sugnings," north prairie squealers we called them. They sounded like a flock of geese: ya, ya, fon chee vas goo split sven.

SOUND: (All laugh good naturedly.)

SOLBERG

And they had sail boats on the lake, too.

KELLY

I know a fellow--he was Charley Isaacson. He tied two fish poles together in a boat and couldn't touch bottom, the water was so deep.

SOLBERG

And you remember when we had 3 flour mills...

HABBERSTAD

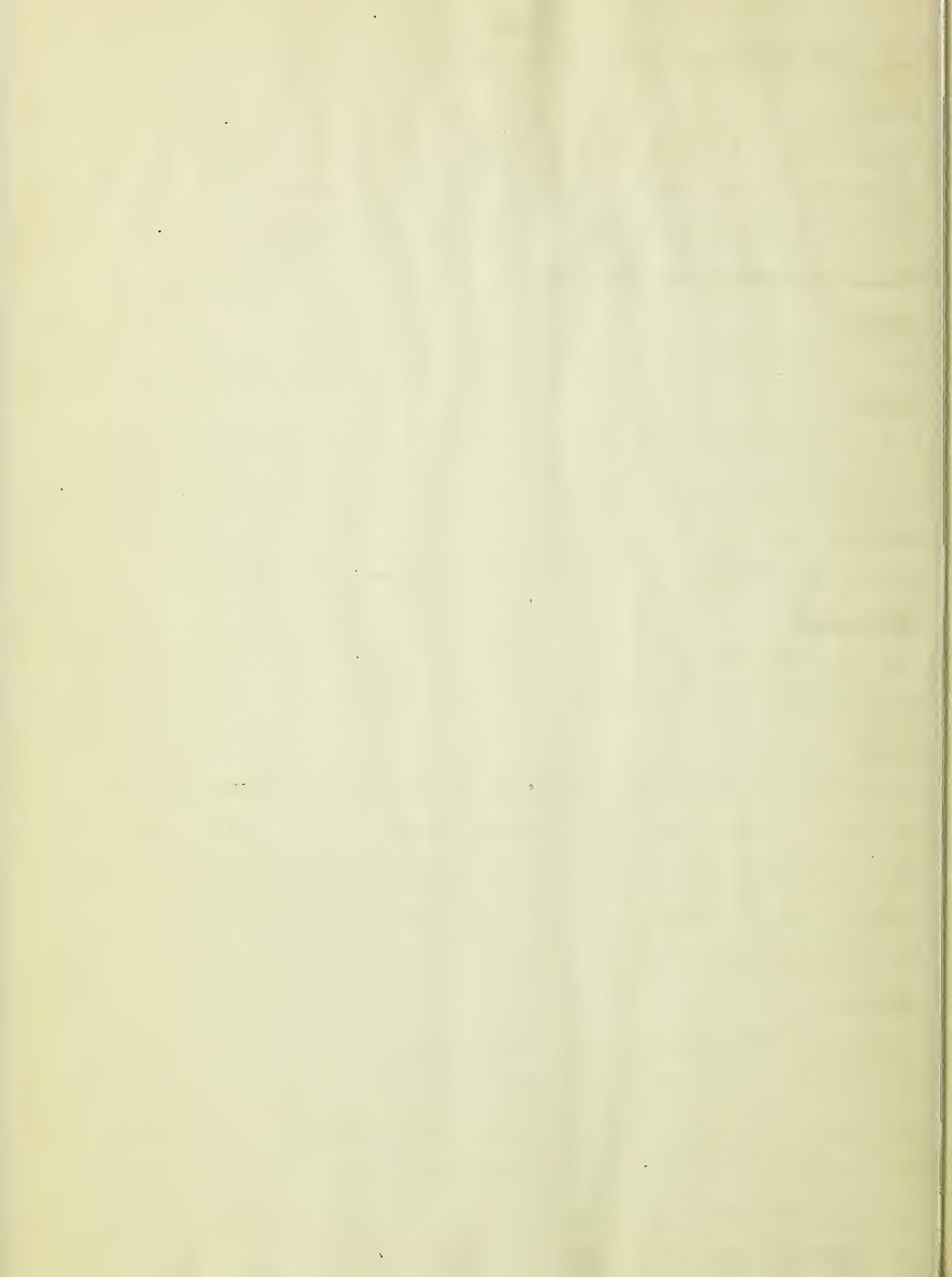
Ya, and there vas 30 coopers and a flax mill. They stored water in that little reservoir--it iss a fish pond now.

KELLY

My father, he bought that forty, where I live, in '72--my mother has told me about it. P. A. Mann--he used to be mayor--he told my dad to buy that whole forty because some day it would fill in with mud and be good land. So I guess somebody was suspicious about the soil washing.

SOLBERG

We came in '79 and the lake wass there, but no one seemed to think but what it would stay there. There wass some Indians who used to come into the valley in winter, and they predicted that someday there would be no lake. I don't think the white people took much stock in that but those Indians wass pretty smart. They could see what farming would do to their wooded hills.



KELLY

I pay taxes on forty acres that used to be in the lake--right where I grow my corn now--14 acres of it.

HABBERSTAD

Vy, yess, I saw Mike Scanlan hoeing corn right above the dam a few year ago.

KELLY

That fellow across the river from me, he pastured that field all summer. It all used to be in the lake. We cut wood in there now, too, right in the middle of the lake. And so do them CCC boys.

GALLIGAN

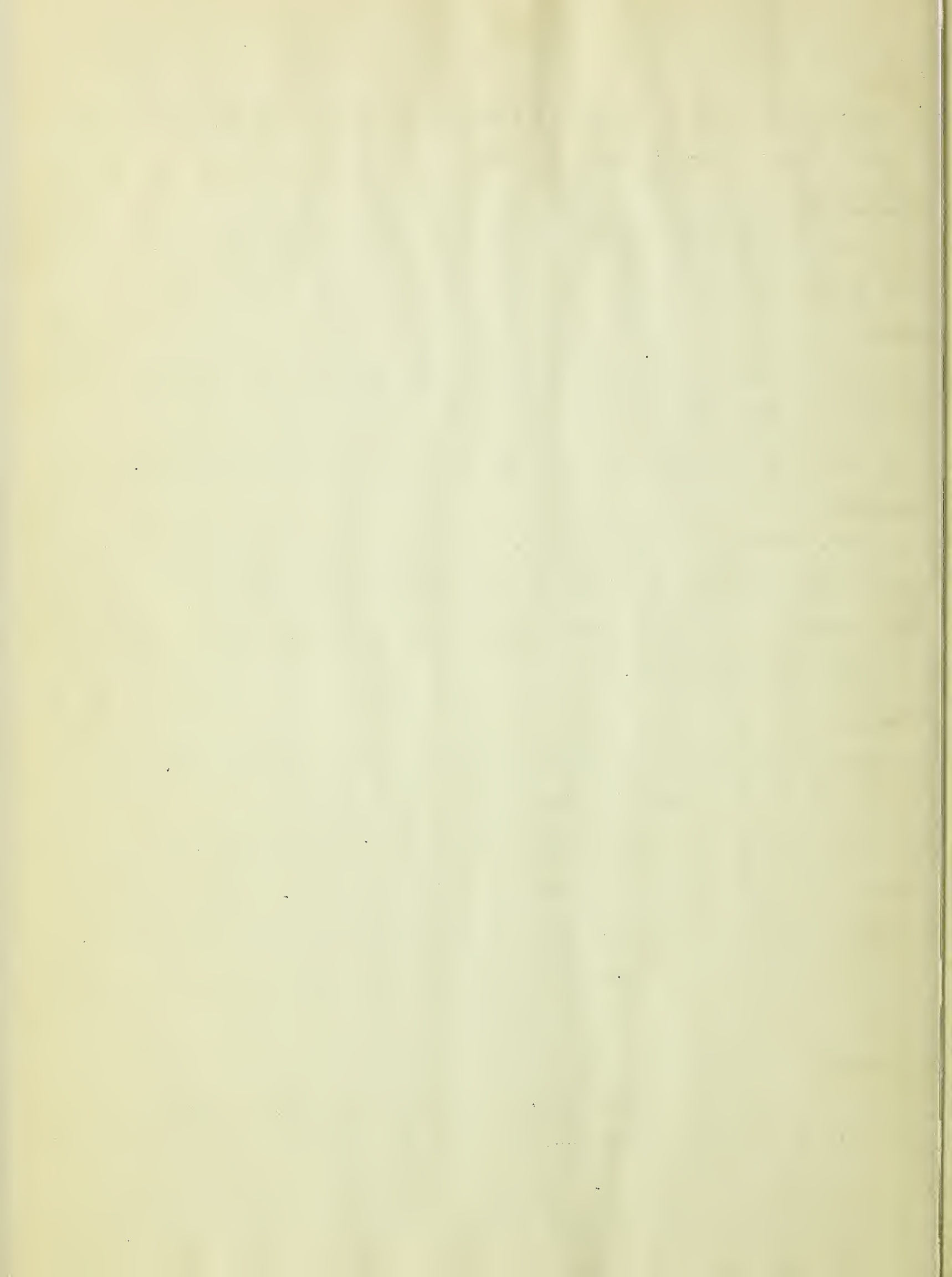
You know, that's a strange thing. The CCC boys are cutting willow sprouts in the lake, to plant on the hillsides, to hold the soil that washes down into the lake to grow the willows. That's what I'd call a vicious cycle.

SOLBERG

But isn't that true of soil erosion, Jim? Look what it does. A man's farm washes away. He abandons it and goes away. That leaves one less taxpayer to support the schools and the churches and the roads. That throws another burden on his neighbors. Maybe they're troubled with soil erosion, too. They can't stand the extra burden. They have to pack up, too. Don't tell me that isn't a vicious cycle.

HABBERSTAD

Ve don't vant dat to happen here. In the early days, poys--you know, I'm 81 and can remember--the vator in dem days vas clear--the valley vas all in voods. Den the farmers dey plowed up the land and the voods vas all gone and the rains vashed the topsoil.





KELLY

It started about 40-45 years ago. The mud and brush and logs began coming down the river. She started to fill in by the old road to Preston and then some islands formed in there.

SOLBERG

Yess, by 1903 it wass about all filled in. The mills shut down. There wasn't enough water to run them.

GALLIGAN

That's true, John. The mills didn't have enough water, but they shut down for another reason. The land failed the farmers. Their topsoil was mostly gone and they couldn't grow enough wheat any more.

KELLY

Carrie Nash was telling me what some man was telling her brother. He said there ought to be some way to put holes in the dam and run water through to clean out the silt.

GALLIGAN

I know, I read that in the paper. But it's just a nice idea...I don't think it can be done. There must be millions of tons of soil in there.

SOLBERG

That's right, Jim, and there isn't anything we can do about it. The lake's gone, and it hass hurt Lanesboro.

HABBERSTAD

Our factories are gone, the mills are gone. In the summer time ve have barely enough vater for the power plant. That lake silted in, clear full, in 35 years. It iss too bad.





ORGAN: JUST A MEMORY.

ANNOUNCER

That is the story of Lanesboro, Minnesota, its rise to a place in the sun, its decline, after the mills were forced to close.

Beautiful Lake Lanesboro was filled with topsoil washed from farmlands along the south branch of Root River. And Fillmore County farmers look today upon their topsoil, lying there in what used to be a reservoir--soil worth thousands of dollars, if they could only bring it back to their fields and pastures. But that soil is gone forever, and Lake Lanesboro is just a memory.

ORGAN: JUST A MEMORY.

ANNOUNCER

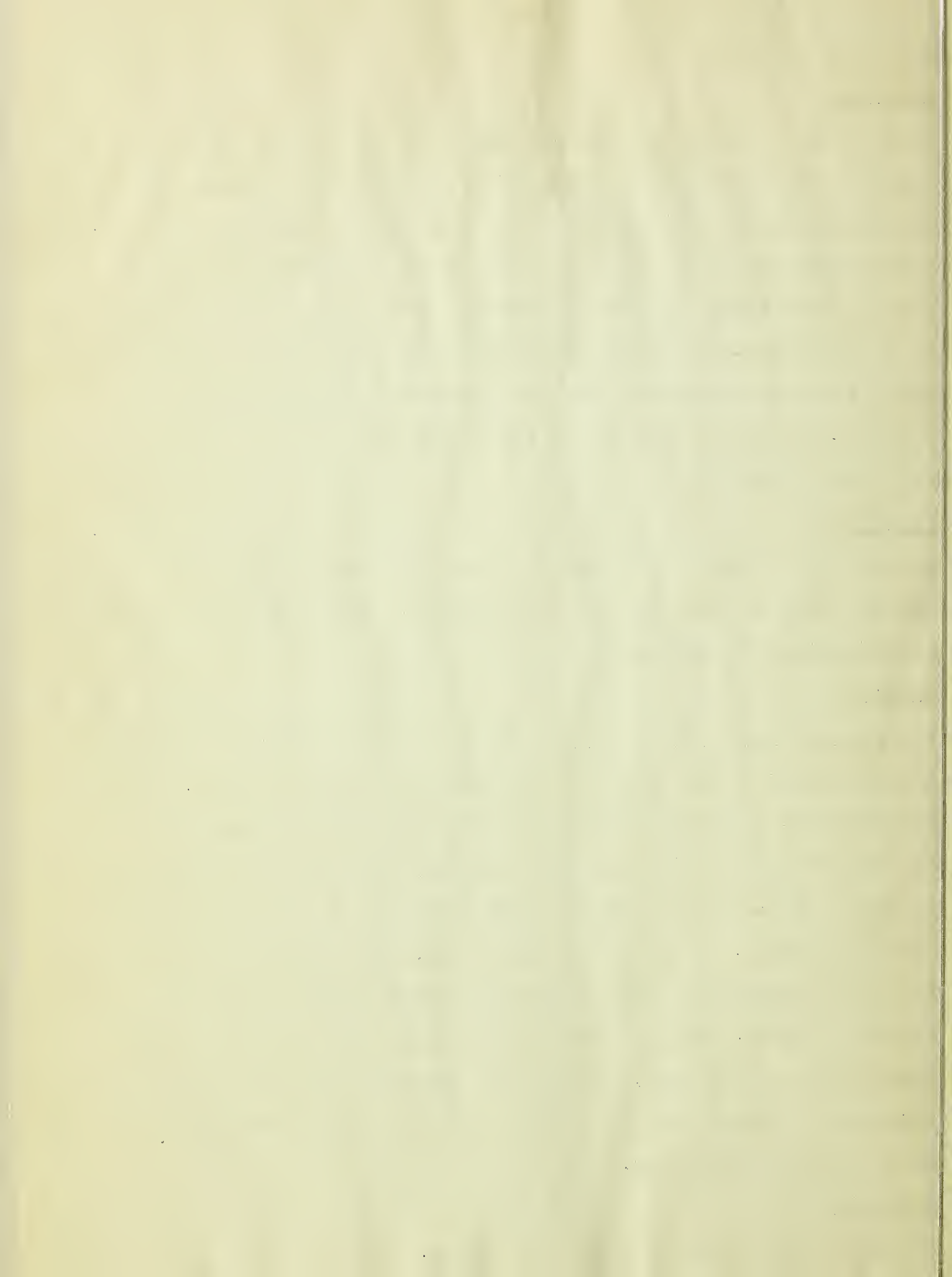
And now let's turn to the Dayton, Ohio, regional office of the Soil Conservation Service, and to Gene Charles. Gene, what can you add to this story of Lanesboro?

CHARLES

Well, \_\_\_\_\_, as an eye-witness to the tragedy I can testify to the truth of the story we have just heard. The dam that Dennis Galligan built with the help of such hardy Norsemen as Olaus Olson, Ole Benson, Nels Johnson, and Frank Erickson, just to name a few--that dam still stands there in the narrow gorge just above Lanesboro. I saw it the other day, and heard Jim Galligan tell that remarkable story of how he helped build it with huge blocks of stone. The men who built that dam had only the crudest implements to work with, and yet they quarried and swung into place rocks that weighed well over a ton. The dam still looks as stable as the Rock of Gibraltar.

ANNOUNCER

It must be something of a local monument.



CHARLES

It is that, \_\_\_\_\_. It's a remarkable piece of stone masonry. Dennis Galligan had no mortar or plaster to seal those stones together. They were simply cut to fit so perfectly that I don't believe water can get between them. I climbed up that icy cliff--and pretty nearly slipped into the whirlpool, incidentally...

ANNOUNCER

(Laughs)

CHARLES

...and I'll tell you, \_\_\_\_\_, it's no laughing matter--Lanesboro's fine lake that is silted completely full until farmers are now growing corn in the middle of it. When I saw it right before me, I really felt the tragedy of Lanesboro's lost lake. That stretch of marshy, swampy land, made by the fertile soil that came from farmlands, makes you realize that we've to to do something about soil erosion in this country.

ANNOUNCER

What can you do? From this little drama I gather that some of the farmers up there near Lanesboro are at least farming the old lake bed.

CHARLES

Yes, in the higher spots, but that doesn't really amount to anything. They are farming, oh, less than a hundred acres of land made there by siltation of the old lake--made of topsoil that was torn from hundreds of thousands of acres up the valley. You see, soil conservation practices must be applied up on the hills. Seems to me, it's a rather ironic fact that a soil conservation-CCC camp is today located squarely on the edge of that old lake bed.





ANNOUNCER

That must be a sort of daily reminder for the farmers of the valley, reminding them that they must hold the soil that's left.

CHARLES

Yes, I believe so. At any rate, there are 78 farmers in this community who have adopted the Soil Conservation Service program and replanned their farms to control erosion. Right now the CCC camp boys--under the direction of Camp Superintendent Mike Carmichael--are working in the watershed of Duschee Creek where farmers like Paul Abrahamson are changing from a cash-grain system of farming to a pasture-meadow-livestock program.

ANNOUNCER

And is Mr. Abrahamson an old-timer there?

CHARLES

No, not exactly, but he remembers that during World War time, the farmers plowed up pasture fields to grow cash grain. The land around Lanesboro isn't level. In fact, some of the hills are young mountains. The land dips and folds, with occasional bits of flat land in the valleys. Where the topsoil is gone, run-off water cuts gullies into the underlying sand--Boone fine sand, they call it. Everywhere you see that sand that has been washed from the steep slopes. It spreads out in ugly, fan-shaped designs and covers the good soil.

ANNOUNCER

Well, Gene, can you really control such erosion by soil-saving practices?





CHARLES

You bet you can, \_\_\_\_\_, and those farmers are doing it. By using the land right, by following the right kind of crop rotations and suitable erosion-control practices, they can farm those hills safely. For example, farther down the river from Duschee Creek there is Evan Engebretson, a young, progressive farmer who has retired eroded land to trees, and some of his steep cropland to pasture. Naturally, he uses contour strip cropping on his rotation cropland. Many neighbors have come to study Mr. Engebretson's soil conservation program.

ANNOUNCER

I suppose that this story of Lanesboro and its sequel--the story of erosion control is rather typical of similar communities the country over.

CHARLES

Well, similar, I should say, to the extent that everywhere, people of this country have wasted their soil resources. And, of course, there are scores of big reservoirs and literally thousands of smaller ponds that have been filled with topsoil from the surrounding farmland. It's a mighty expensive process--as our friends in Lanesboro well appreciate.

ANNOUNCER

And soil conservation methods will help to prevent it?

CHARLES

Indeed they will, \_\_\_\_\_, and, to those who want to know more about those methods, I'd like to suggest that bulletin on "Soil Defense."



ANNOUNCER

Oh, yes, those regional booklets that tell what farmers are doing to control erosion. If you would like your copy of this bulletin, just write to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio, and say you want "Soil Defense."

CHARLES

In this story of Lanesboro, Minnesota, we have said that the Norwegians and the Irish worked and fought and played together. They also stick together. In that community it's all for each and each for all.

ANNOUNCER

And that's the way it should be.

CHARLES

One thing more. I want to thank those good people of Lanesboro for their kindness in helping us to present this history of Lanesboro Lake. Jim Galligan, O. U. Habberstad, John Solberg, Carrie Nash, Ole Habberstad, John Kelly, and J. R. Durkin--they know that soil erosion has been costly to them, and they are glad to have their story repeated, so that it may help people in other communities to stop erosion--before it is too late.

ORGAN: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

ANNOUNCER

Next week, Arkansas organizes to fight soil erosion.

SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain...

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away is a studio presentation of the agriculture department of the Nation's Station.

